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Chairman: Mr. Butagira (Uganda)
later: Ms. Carvalho (Vice-Chairman) (Portugal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 05 a.m.

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/60/175 and Corr.1, A/60/207, A/60/282 and A/60/335)

1. **Ms. Holguin Cuéllar** (Colombia) said that the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, had done much to improve the lives of children around the world. By committing to a cooperative approach and supporting national capacity, the United Nations had a unique opportunity to produce results, transforming words into tangible projects that made a difference in the lives of boys and girls around the world. The United Nations system should join with Governments in strengthening programmes to help children affected by poverty, orphanhood, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, physical and psychological abuse, natural disasters, and conflicts.

2. A comprehensive approach that on occasion included the family and the local community was imperative in solving the problems afflicting children. It was also important to cooperate with States on strategies and initiatives in the areas of education and technical training aimed at developing children's skills for productive employment as adults. Such an approach could provide a response to the problems of poverty and the demobilization of recruited children. Some of the main activities that could benefit from the support of the United Nations included investing in small and medium-sized businesses, involving the private sector, coordinating work with civil society, and building capacity.

3. In Colombia where children were recruited by illegal armed groups the United Nations could generate tangible results by acting forcefully in the areas of prevention, demobilization, and rehabilitation. Her Government would like to see the expeditious preparation of United Nations proposals on projects and programmes that could be implemented by the relevant entities together with Member States.

4. **Ms. Al-Mohmoud** (Qatar) said that her country had submitted its first national report on implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the areas of child trafficking and the exploitation of children for

prostitution and pornography. Qatar had also taken steps to protect children and women from violence and abuse at home, at work and in society at large, promulgating new legislation and creating a number of service organizations, including an institution that operated a hotline and emergency assistance service for children and women who were victims of abuse, violence and exploitation.

5. In accordance with article 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Qatar was coordinating its child protection efforts with those of international organizations. For example, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs had organized jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights training workshops to educate groups working with children about the objectives of the Convention. Held during 2004 and 2005, the workshops had been attended by paediatricians, judges, youth workers and labour inspectors. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs was also partnering with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to promote the cultural rights of students, producing educational material linking the Convention's principles with those of the Islamic sharia as a guide. A law had been enacted in May 2005 prohibiting the training and employment of children in camel races, and the Qatar House for Refuge and Social Welfare had been established.

6. **Mr. Khan** (Bangladesh) said that children were the most valuable asset of any nation. Despite the nearly universal ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the global situation concerning children remained mixed. There had been progress in many parts of the world, but children were still victims of poverty, armed conflict and trafficking, and other challenges, such as hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, disability and HIV/AIDS, continued to exist. Bangladesh, which was a party to international and regional instruments designed to ensure the protection of children and had also enacted domestic enabling legislation in that area, believed that it was necessary to focus further on the situation of children affected by armed conflict and on the suffering of children under foreign occupation.

7. In Bangladesh, a separate ministry was devoted solely to the welfare of women and children, and the Government had already implemented two national plans of action. The third such plan, covering the period 2004-2009, focused on five main areas: food

and nutrition, health, education and empowerment of the girl-child, protection from abuse, exploitation and violence, and the physical environment. His Government accorded the highest priority to programmes such as Education for All, particularly for girls. Bangladesh had already achieved the third Millennium Development Goal target relating to gender parity in primary and secondary schools. An extended immunization programme had substantially reduced child mortality and malnutrition, and programmes were also under way regarding abandoned and street children.

8. **Mr. Mercado** (Philippines) said that the National Strategic Framework Plan for the Development Of Children (Child 21) focused on the holistic, integrated delivery of services to promote the health, nutrition, education, psychological care and social protection of children, and maternal care. His Government had embarked on a nationwide campaign to build capacity on target issues such as violence against children, nutrition, juvenile justice, the empowerment of children as participants in development, and effective parenting. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly in 2002 had emphasized the need to promote healthy lives, provide quality education, combat HIV/AIDS and protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence.

9. Although clear standards and measurable indicators had been set for those issues, greater efforts were needed to develop concrete goals, clearer norms and better cooperation to address situations that endangered children, such as armed conflict, trafficking, domestic violence, unsafe work conditions and conflict with the law. Juvenile justice was an area that merited greater attention. Children in detention were vulnerable to violence, cruel treatment and unfit conditions. Noting the frank assessment of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the report of the Independent Expert, he said that law enforcement officials must be educated and compelled to observe national and international norms in the treatment of children. Moreover, those norms must be strengthened by national laws ensuring that law enforcement methods, detention conditions, and judicial processes were tailored to protect the rights of children in conflict with the law, and the Philippines was currently considering such legislation. Budgetary restraints and inadequate institutional capacity were two of the main obstacles in the way of achieving the lofty goal of "a

world fit for children". Increased international financing could go a long way towards removing those obstacles. Countries should also make a special effort to address the broader issues of peace, stability and socio-economic development, with a view to improving the environment in which children lived.

10. **Mr. Hyassat** (Jordan) said that his country was continuing to carry out its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments including the document entitled "A world fit for children", and had incorporated them in national strategies and work plans and in specific measures designed to create a favourable environment for the upbringing of children.

11. Jordan had enacted and amended laws and regulations including the Young People's Act, the Youth Probation Act and the Children's Rights Bill which was currently before parliament for adoption. The Government was endeavouring to make such legislation responsive to the needs of children and to focus on protecting them and preventing exploitation, especially with regard to employment. It had also established a number of institutions and units concerned with children, including the National Council for Family Affairs and the Family Protection Department, which handled cases of domestic violence and sexual aggression against children. A partnership was being created between the public sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations. The Early Childhood Plan addressed child development in the fields of education and health and children with special needs. A national childhood plan (2004-2013) conferred on decision-makers in childcare institutions responsibility for devising detailed programmes for all age groups in a manner that respected the basic principles of children's rights.

12. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the basic document for the protection of children's rights, and the periodic reports on its implementation were the most important means of monitoring the enforcement of those rights at the country level. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had analysed the third periodic report of the Russian Federation, and its final comments would serve to guide the future action of the Russian Government in that area.

13. In accordance with the recommendations contained in the outcome document entitled "A world

fit for children", the Russian Federation had drawn up its national plan of action for children until the year 2010. Priority areas of the plan focused on improving children's health, education and economic conditions. His Government was continuing to increase budgetary allocations in the areas of health and education, which would have a direct impact on children's well-being. One of the elements in the major reforms under way included the establishment of a governmental commission on minors, acting as a central body for the inter-ministerial coordination of activities related to the protection of children's rights. New initiatives to increase protection for minors against violence included the recent adoption of a charter against violence and cruelty. The charter was aimed at preventing the dissemination of material promoting violence and cruelty and also at the self-regulation of the media, especially where children's rights were concerned.

14. His Government believed that the problems of children should receive high priority in national development and supported the further mobilization of efforts by the international community, at both the global and regional levels, to safeguard the rights of children to life, development and protection, including in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

15. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that everyone could agree that children were the most precious treasure of humankind. They were also the most vulnerable to war and poverty and bore the impact of adults' actions and decisions. Although important positive steps had been taken to protect war-afflicted children, all violations of children's rights during war should be monitored and reported and all those who deliberately targeted, abused or exploited children should be held accountable. San Marino had been among the countries that had insisted on the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which required Governments to take concrete measures to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict.

16. Her Government hoped that the Government of Uganda and the rebels belonging to the Lord's Resistance Army would find a negotiated solution to their conflict and look after the well-being of their children. Many children caught up in that conflict had been used as combatants or forced into sexual slavery. Calling for all countries to stop the violence against entire ethnic groups as well as children, she said that it was necessary to work together with international and

humanitarian organizations to alleviate the suffering of those populations. Her Government was convinced that conflicts could and must be solved through dialogue, understanding and negotiation.

17. In 2005, her country had undertaken a number of humanitarian initiatives on behalf of children, mainly in Africa. The independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General had reported that the level of violence against children remained shocking. Insufficient financial and human resources were allocated to prevent and combat such violence. Children themselves were not properly informed about the opportunities available to them and their rights. In many countries corporal punishment was still practised in schools and there were no mechanisms to protect children from domestic violence, abuse and neglect. San Marino was particularly concerned about the growth of the sex industry involving children and urged all countries to take the appropriate steps to prevent child prostitution and child pornography.

18. **Mr. Nsemi** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his Government had taken a number of institutional measures designed to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to collect and disseminate information on the status of children in his country. Congolese health and education strategies were based on recommendations made during the World Summit on Children and on the Declaration and Plan of Action approved during the special session of the General Assembly on children. Moreover, with backing from the United Nations Children's Fund, his Government had recently established a youth parliament.

19. In his country, thousands of children died before the age of five. Seventy per cent of those deaths were caused by malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and HIV/AIDS. His Government was working to improve health services, provide education on nutrition and conduct vaccination campaigns against polio and other life-threatening diseases. Together with development partners and local communities, it was striving to rehabilitate the country's post-conflict educational infrastructure and to mobilize resources to implement a national plan to provide universal education for boys and girls. It had also adopted a plan to promote justice for minors by harmonizing and improving the legal framework.

20. The struggle against HIV/AIDS continued to be an impediment to socio-economic development in his country, as well as in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Noting the feminization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he said that the 2003-2006 national plan to combat HIV/AIDS included strategies to reduce mother-to-child transmission, and to support orphans and families with relatives who had been affected by the disease.

21. The Government had established priority action programmes designed to eradicate poverty but would be unable to achieve that goal without the help of development partners and the international community.

22. **Ms. Onyoni-Mogaka** (Kenya) said that her delegation noted with appreciation the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/60/207, A/60/175 and A/60/282. It encouraged those countries that had not yet done so to sign, ratify and accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and to take measures to implement them. The responses of Governments to the questionnaire of the Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children would provide a basis for responding to the continued violation of children's rights. Kenya had already submitted its response and would continue to work closely with the independent expert. Her delegation encouraged regional and subregional initiatives aimed at developing mechanisms, instruments and policies to deal with the problem of war-affected children.

23. Welcoming the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/60/335), she urged that more resources should be allocated to the Office of the Special Representative to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively. It was incumbent upon the international community to protect children, who were the most vulnerable group in situations of armed conflict. Support by Member States of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child would establish the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces. The provision of peacekeeping forces with a strong mandate to protect civilian populations would also help to alleviate the problem. Her delegation therefore welcomed the deployment of child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

24. Kenya had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; had signed the other Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; had recently ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and had recently adopted national regulations to streamline and speed up the process of adoption, as well as regulations to protect children against the risk of sale, trafficking and abduction.

25. To address the huge problems resulting from the HIV/AIDS pandemic, her Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, civil society and other donors, had formulated a national plan for orphaned and vulnerable children. Considerable progress had been made towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in the field of education. The free primary education policy had successfully enrolled both girls and boys in primary schools. However, the main focus remained on children in special circumstances, such as those affected by HIV/AIDS and extreme poverty.

26. Despite the advances made in the promotion and protection of children's rights, the rate of progress remained uneven. Her delegation therefore wished to see more international cooperation to monitor and evaluate the various initiatives for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols.

27. **Mr. Alaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that much progress still had to be made if children and young people were to have a better life, particularly in developing countries. To that end, the international community should make more deliberate efforts to combat the violation of children's rights in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. More efforts were also needed to ensure the earliest possible prosecution of those responsible for war crimes against children.

28. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Islamic Republic of Iran had recently submitted its second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The latter had observed that the Islamic Republic of Iran was a

country where enormous reforms were taking place so that all children enjoyed the rights enshrined in the Convention.

29. In its development plans, his Government had provided the means for promoting the education of girls, narrowing the gender gap, revising or amending certain laws related to children, expanding preschool education, ensuring pre- and post-natal support, and enhancing children's participation in decision-making processes. The Ministry of Education had mostly focused its activities on increasing educational coverage for girls, especially in rural areas, and reducing the educational gap between urban and rural areas. In the field of health, his Government was developing and implementing the policies needed to control malnutrition and promote breastfeeding. Numerous non-governmental organizations had been directly or indirectly involved in issues related to children in the country. The Islamic Commission on Human Rights, an independent national institution, monitored and reported on the performance of different organs of the Government with respect to human rights issues, including those involving children. The Commission had also developed plans to provide education about the rights of the child.

30. **Mr. Noghés** (Monaco) said that the international community needed to demonstrate the political will to achieve its priority objectives, which must include the protection of children. To that end, it should make full use of the means available to it, including legal instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children should also guide collective action for the protection of children and the promotion of their rights.

31. Monaco unreservedly supported regional and national activities carried out in the field, since they made it possible to recognize the scale of the evils committed against children. The international community must combat all forms of violence against children. Monaco firmly opposed all forms of corporal punishment, honour crimes and all such practices as female genital mutilation and believed that the media could play a major role in raising awareness with a view to their elimination.

32. Poverty was an obstacle to development, especially as poverty-reduction strategies were rarely based on child protection issues. Monaco helped to improve the lives of children through various bilateral cooperation projects and international organizations. For example, the Government had responded to appeals by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF for vaccination campaigns against polio and meningitis; had helped to establish schools in certain sub-Saharan and West African countries; and had extended support to child refugees and disabled children by providing them with special accommodation and education adapted to their needs.

33. Children benefited from an effective social protection system in Monaco. Legislative provisions had been adopted in the Code of Criminal Procedure to ensure the prosecution of anyone committing criminal acts against children or offences against public decency in its territory, and also of nationals of Monaco committing such crimes or offences outside the country. The Code provided for the prosecution of anyone organizing or facilitating the sexual exploitation of minors on or outside national territory.

34. He hoped that Monaco would soon be in a position to announce its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Monaco's experts were working to amend and update domestic codes and laws so that they were in full conformity with the terms of the Protocol. In conclusion, he recalled that at the fifty-ninth session Prince Albert II had invited the international community to study ways of ending impunity for those who committed the worst crimes against children.

35. **Mr. Sebulime** (Uganda) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/60/207 and said that his delegation had taken note of the particular strengths and weaknesses in the follow-up process. The promotion and protection of children's rights was a very important aspect of Uganda's national policy. His Government had therefore implemented a universal primary education programme and would soon embark on one for secondary education.

36. Education was also one of the key defences against the spread of HIV/AIDS, to which women and girls were particularly vulnerable. His delegation therefore welcomed the objectives of the World AIDS

Conference to promote the role of women and girls in the fight against the pandemic. That campaign had been launched by the President of Uganda and follow-up guidelines were being developed by the Uganda AIDS Commission for dissemination to all relevant stakeholders countrywide. Uganda had recently held the fourth National AIDS Conference, bringing together HIV/AIDS researchers, professionals and practitioners to establish the basis for an evidence-based response to the pandemic. The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to the Youth was galvanizing all partners in the national fight against HIV/AIDS through education, information and communication initiatives to reach young people.

37. His delegation said that it was obvious from the statement of the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict that the report contained in document A/60/335 was the product of her predecessor. Where Uganda was concerned, the report was laced with political activism instead of advocacy. The former Special Representative had, for many years, misused his Office to misrepresent the situation in northern Uganda, an area where he was born and raised. It was unfortunate that he had left without making a positive impact and that he had undermined his mandate with an ulterior agenda. The present report was simply a duplication of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/59/695-S/2005/72), which had been written by the former Special Representative and had erroneously listed the Local Defence Units (LDUs) among the parties committing grave child rights violations. The present report continued to endorse allegations that were not based on balanced and objective research, thereby undermining the proposed monitoring and reporting mechanism.

38. His delegation's concerns about the former Special Representative had been borne out in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/59/331, which pointed to shortcomings in the way in which the Special Representative had addressed issues and concerns relating to children and armed conflict. United Nations actors, non-governmental organizations and numerous Member States had found reports prepared by the Special Representative lacking in appropriate content, analysis and tone. It had also been found that the working methods of the Special Representative had greatly diminished the impact of the efforts undertaken. His delegation found it

regrettable that those shortcomings had been allowed to prevail at the expense of children, particularly those in northern Uganda, and it hoped that they would be rectified immediately. While it was right to name and sanction the terrorist group known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), it was grossly wrong to list the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and LDUs in the same category. They did not use child soldiers but rather rescued the children abducted by LRA and protected the camps of internally displaced persons from further attack. His delegation therefore demanded that they should both be removed from the list in annex II to document A/59/695-S/2005/72 without further delay. His Government welcomed the issuance by the International Criminal Court of arrest warrants for the top leadership of LRA for crimes against humanity and war crimes. It hoped that all States would comply with those warrants and fully cooperate with the Court.

39. His delegation called upon the United Nations to ensure transparency, objectivity and professionalism in implementing its monitoring and reporting mechanism and in addressing the rights of children in armed conflicts.

40. **Ms. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that Croatia had in the past few years undertaken a broad national reform in the field of children's rights, resulting in the passage of new legislation: the Protection against Domestic Violence Act and the Ombudsperson for Children Act. The Ombudsperson institution was an independent, non-partisan body that coordinated all activities for the protection of children, in particular against violence and sexual abuse. In addition, her country had recently adopted a specific programme against trafficking in children. Croatia's national strategy for protection from domestic violence (2005-2007) and subsequent protocol included measures for the protection of children. On the basis of the commitments undertaken in 1990 at the World Summit for Children, the Government had revised a national action plan for children with the aim of improving conditions for the most vulnerable among them. It was particularly concerned about violence against children and had responded to the questionnaire for the United Nations study on the subject. At the national level, it had taken a number of steps in that area, adopting a programme of activities against violence among children and adolescents and a related protocol, together with an action plan against drug abuse.

41. Her Government enjoyed fruitful cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with which it had signed a cooperation agreement aimed at creating a safe and stimulating environment for primary and secondary schoolchildren and raising public awareness about violence against children, for which purpose UNICEF had also conducted a campaign in the country. In 2004 Croatia had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, whose recommendations it had either already put into effect, as in the case of the protection of children's privacy in criminal proceedings, or was currently implementing. It also intended to include them in its priority activities for children's welfare programme 2006-2008. Croatia was currently preparing its first report under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and would continue to give high priority to the protection of children's rights.

42. **Mr. Diallo** (Mali), after specifying that the issues raised by the independent expert in paragraph 32 of his report (A/60/282) had been duly noted, said that his country endorsed the main conclusions in the reports before the Committee. His Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols and had submitted its second periodic report under that Convention in 2005, taking the opportunity to withdraw its reservation regarding article 16 thereof. Mali was also a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and ILO Conventions No. 182 and 138 for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and on the minimum age for admission to employment, respectively.

43. In its efforts to build a world fit for children, Mali was hampered by extreme poverty and the weight of tradition. It had nevertheless achieved a number of notable advances, in particular by improving sanitation in houses and schools and introducing hygiene training in basic education. It had also made progress in fighting malaria through the provision of mosquito nets and in developing protection against polio through the organization of national vaccination days. In its efforts it had benefited from the support of development partners and from the fruitful partnership of United Nations system bodies, especially UNICEF.

44. Education was a high priority for the Government of Mali, and was receiving an increasing share in the State budget. New classrooms had been built, the salaries of teachers had been raised and more teacher-

training institutes had been opened. Measures to promote gender equality in school enrolments had met with considerable success.

45. In conclusion, he referred to the steps taken in his country to protect children against ill-treatment, exploitation and violence, in particular, consciousness-raising about children's rights, establishment of a children's parliament, efforts to combat child labour, begging and cross-border trafficking, and sensitization measures to discourage the practice of female genital mutilation.

46. *Ms. Carvalho (Portugal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

47. **Mr. Constantino** (Angola) welcomed the progress achieved in strengthening norms for the protection of children and developing initiatives for the promotion of their rights, referring in particular to the well-nigh universal support given to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Much more needed to be done, however, particularly by treating children's rights within a broader framework in which peace, development and human rights were seen as being mutually reinforcing. That meant that action to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those relating to human rights, should take into account their multidimensional, multisectoral and interdependent nature.

48. On emerging from a decade of civil war, Angola had benefited from partnerships with United Nations system bodies and civil society organizations in carrying out three major initiatives: a national measles campaign; a back-to-school campaign in all provinces; and the establishment of a national child protection framework for the reunification of separated families and the registration of births. Those initiatives had been decided on not only in response to specific problems but also because they set in motion processes contributing to the aims of the national strategy to combat poverty. They would thus help to reduce child mortality, promote education for all, promote the rights of children, contribute to the resettlement of millions of Angolans and restore basic health and education systems across the country.

49. Although the situation of children in Angola was still far from satisfactory, it had improved, in particular through the adoption of a national strategy to combat poverty. Progress had been made towards the Millennium Development Goals relating to access to

primary education, the reduction of infant mortality and the fight against malaria and other diseases. It was still necessary, however, to address the question of resource mobilization for development.

50. **Mr. Dhakal** (Nepal) said that the Government of Nepal remained committed to implementing the Convention at the national, regional and international levels, in partnership with other stakeholders, by seeking to remedy the ills and suffering to which children were exposed. In order for children to become productive citizens, they needed to benefit from a proper education, suitable health facilities and a favourable economic and social environment. Children's issues had therefore to be addressed in conjunction with the challenges of overall socio-economic development. Determined though it was to advance on all those fronts, Nepal needed additional international financial and technical assistance to achieve the objectives of its national action plan for children.

51. Nepal had been actively promoting the rights of children through legislative and administrative measures and development policies and programmes. Under its Constitution, children were protected from trafficking, slavery, serfdom and forced labour, while a number of legislative provisions safeguarded their rights and protected their interests, as well as prohibiting their employment under the age of 16. In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, Nepal was a party to ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and the worst forms of child labour respectively, and had taken steps to reflect them in its national policies. It had submitted its third periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with which it maintained a good dialogue.

52. Under its current five-year plan, and through the establishment of appropriate institutions, Nepal was seeking to reduce poverty through the development of education, health facilities and rural infrastructure, giving high priority to social inclusion and social sector development, while aiming to raise the literacy rate to 63 per cent, notably by providing free primary education for all. He emphasized in that connection its fruitful partnership with civil society and non-governmental organizations and the complementary role of regional endeavours, citing its commitment to

Conventions adopted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

53. His Government nevertheless faced a daunting challenge, compounded in recent years by terrorist activities. Expressing the hope that the forthcoming elections there would provide impetus for socio-economic development, he urged the international community to support Nepal, so as to enhance its capacity to achieve the Millennium Goals and implement the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its special session on children.

54. **Ms. Pires** (Cape Verde) said that, while it was often asserted that children should be a priority for any country wishing to attain higher levels of development, such was not the reality in various parts of the world, despite progress in some areas. Citing the many obstacles to children's full enjoyment of their rights, she stressed her Government's deep concern about children affected by HIV/AIDS, conflict, malnutrition, abuse and trafficking. If the goals for children laid down by the international community were to be met, debt relief for developing countries was extremely important, particularly as the structural reforms required by financial institutions had tied up the resources of Governments and limited their capacity to intervene in crucial areas of social development.

55. For the Government of Cape Verde, investing in children was a fundamental strategic investment and a first step towards eradicating poverty. Education was accordingly its highest priority, as was reflected in its national plan and in its achievement of universal primary schooling, made possible by improved national legislation and cooperation with international human rights institutions. Problems remained, however, in regard to academic standards, teacher training and access to secondary, vocational and higher education, while many parents could not cover the costs of education for their children. Targeted aid was therefore provided to the poorest children, including the establishment of school canteens and better access to education and to medical care. In public health there had been notable improvements, reflected in lower rates of maternal and under-five child mortality and a marked increase in life expectancy. However, a serious problem that remained was the relatively high number of unwanted early pregnancies.

56. She mentioned in conclusion the excellent work done by UNICEF in her country and the valuable

cooperation of non-governmental organizations in endeavouring to make a world fit for children in Cape Verde, including the most vulnerable among them.

57. **Mr. Kim Il-bum** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation welcomed the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children and had taken note of the cooperation between the independent expert and existing mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

58. Public awareness of child abuse had increased in the Republic of Korea. Considerable progress had been made with regard to legislation, programmes and policies, and centres had been established to provide medical treatment, counselling and legal aid to child victims of sexual violence.

59. With respect to the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, his delegation reaffirmed its full support for the "era of application" campaign led by the Special Representative and suggested that the campaign should not be limited to the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. It urged all concerned parties to comply with relevant international norms and to ratify and implement the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and endorsed the Special Representative's recommendation regarding a separate resolution on children and armed conflict (A/60/335, para. 68 (a)).

60. His Government was continually striving to strengthen its efforts to protect and promote children's rights. A review of children's policies was currently being carried out, with a view to fully incorporating the outcome of the special session on children and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

61. **Mr. Mayoral** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that its members had reviewed their national plans for children in order to incorporate the objectives and commitments agreed upon at the special session on children. The Rio Group was convinced that poverty eradication strategies and economic and social development plans for children must be supplemented with programmes for protection against violence, exploitation and discrimination and with education programmes that focused on the most vulnerable population groups. It was also essential to provide free and compulsory primary education to all children regardless of race and gender and to develop

specific plans and programmes to eradicate child labour.

62. Given that most members of the Third Committee considered the rights of the child a priority and that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified almost universally, the Rio Group was perplexed that the draft resolution on the rights of the child, which was being co-sponsored by many of the Rio Group countries and the European Union, had repeatedly been put to a vote. The Rio Group called upon the Committee to adopt the resolution by consensus.

63. Violence against children was a matter of great concern to the Rio Group. Children in the Latin American region suffered different kinds of violence, including family violence, excessive use of force by law enforcement officers, kidnapping and youth gangs. The Governments of the region were making every effort to confront the problem and it was hoped that the international community would assist them in doing so.

64. The Rio Group called upon the Office of the Special Representative to cooperate closely with Member States in matters regarding children and armed conflict, including the implementation of projects for the demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers.

65. **Mr. Zahiran** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN attached great importance to the promotion and protection of children and had adopted several joint action programmes, including one in 2004 which had identified areas in which regional interventions could complement national actions. It had also established cooperative programmes in the areas of child prostitution, child labour and child trafficking, and was actively cooperating with the relevant international bodies to address the issues of child abuse, children with special needs and juvenile offenders.

66. With respect to child development, ASEAN had identified targets, such as providing recreational facilities, attending to the special needs of gifted children or children with disabilities, promoting training in parenting skills, and providing care services for children.

67. ASEAN was actively cooperating with UNICEF and had formulated a workplan on the welfare of children and young persons to be used as a guide for

long-term cooperation. The workplan addressed priorities identified in the ASEAN declaration of commitments on children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the outcome of the special session on children entitled "A world fit for children".

68. **Mr. Tidjani** (Cameroon) said that, despite the progress achieved since the special session on children, the world continued to face many challenges in the field of child protection and development. Six million children died each year from preventable or treatable diseases, and access to quality education was kept in check by armed conflicts, child trafficking, child labour, HIV/AIDS and political instability. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General regarding adequate funding for children's programmes, strengthened capacity-building of national children's organizations, the full involvement of children, parliamentarians and civil societies in children's issues, and the need for reliable statistics.

69. With regard to health and education, Cameroon gave special priority to paediatric care, the establishment of rural health centres, the provision of drinking water and vaccination programmes for endemic and disabling diseases. Free primary school education had been instituted in 2000 and a basic education programme that gave priority to girls had been implemented with the support of UNICEF. As a result of that programme, school enrolment had risen considerably and gender disparity had been reduced.

70. Where the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence was concerned, Cameroon had acceded to virtually all the international legal instruments on the rights of the child and was cooperating closely with neighbouring countries to prevent the economic exploitation of children. Public institutions for the protection of young children and socially handicapped children had been established and draft legislation on the protection of individuals and the family was being finalized.

71. Measures to combat HIV/AIDS had been included in the national strategic programme for poverty eradication. The HIV/AIDS campaign focused on prevention, particularly with respect to transmission from mother to child, and included a programme for testing and psychosocial support for infected children and orphans.

72. Armed conflict constituted one of the major obstacles to the well-being of children. Cameroon commended the multidimensional actions taken by the Special Representative to raise international awareness of the suffering of war-affected children as well as his efforts to ensure the era of application of international standards and norms for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. He was pleased to report that Cameroon regularly took in thousands of refugee children from Central Africa.

73. His delegation commended the efforts of the independent expert to gather reliable information on the issue of violence against children and urgently called upon the international community to strengthen its efforts to build a world truly fit for children.

74. **Mr. Shafer** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the most fundamental right of the child was the right to life. Given that 10.6 million children still died each year, mainly of preventable causes, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and its worldwide relief service would continue to pursue its child vaccination programmes around the globe.

75. The Sovereign Military Order of Malta strongly condemned the violence, abuse and exploitation to which 300 million children worldwide were subjected and emphasized that sexual abuse and child trafficking had a disproportionate effect on girl children.

76. A significant number of children had been orphaned by AIDS and many more had been separated from their parents by conflict, violence, poverty and social breakdown. The Sovereign Military Order of Malta supported the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child following its general discussion on the subject of children without parental care and had improved both its orphanages and schools.

77. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had clearly indicated that the international community needed to redirect its energies from developing norms to enforcing their application on the ground. With that in mind, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta was making every effort to guarantee children the right to be born, protected and educated.

78. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that Governments, international organizations and non-governmental

organizations shared a duty to develop policies and laws guaranteeing children the right to live in a safe and morally stable family environment. The Organization of the Islamic Conference shared the view of the Secretary-General that "the building of a world fit for children would be a major step in fulfilling the commitments of the Millennium Summit of 2000" (A/60/207, para. 4). However, that world could not be built unless the international community intensified its action in favour of disadvantaged children and families across the world.

79. In cooperation with UNICEF and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Organization of the Islamic Conference had convened its first conference on the welfare and protection of the Muslim child, with the objective of reviewing the status of implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the twenty-seventh special session and of developing a coordinated approach for future actions. The Organization had also held a series of conferences on the victimization of children in recent wars and conflicts and had called upon its member States to prevent children from becoming involved in such conflicts. It remained committed to working with the United Nations and its relevant programmes and agencies, and with non-governmental organizations, to provide humanitarian assistance to children victimized by armed conflicts.

80. **Mr. Pekarchuk** (Ukraine) said that his delegation was pleased that many countries had strengthened their national legislation on the prevention of child trafficking, child prostitution and pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Ukraine had become a party to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and was encouraged that the scope of international instruments on the protection of the rights of the child had been expanded.

81. Although the 2005 World Summit Outcome had reinforced the Millennium Development Goals and the goals set out in the Plan of Action of the special session on children, it appeared that the protection of children remained a challenge in many parts of the world. A shocking number of children suffered from poverty and disease and continued to face threats of violence, exploitation and discrimination.

82. The health of the children following the disaster at Chernobyl, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the

trafficking of women and children gave rise to particular concern in Ukraine. The Government had strengthened its national programmes on human trafficking and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and its national policies on the social protection of children. It was reviewing a draft programme on combating the homelessness and neglect of children and planned to develop a national plan of action for 2006-2016 on implementing the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

83. The Government recognized that it was vital to cooperate with foreign Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations, and wished to stress its support for UNICEF in particular. It agreed with the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children that nothing meaningful could be accomplished unless States respected the obligations enshrined in the human rights treaties on violence against children. Ukraine pledged to do its utmost to make those changes a reality.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.